



HOME BUILDERS ASSOCIATION OF CONNECTICUT, INC.
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Business*

March 2, 2009

To: Senator Eric Coleman, Co-Chairman
Representative Brendan Sharkey, Co-Chairman
Members of the Planning & Development Committee

From: Bill Ethier, CAE, Chief Executive Officer

Re: Raised Bill 6464, AAC Coordinated Preservation and Development

The HBA of Connecticut is a professional trade association with almost one thousand, three hundred (1,300) member firms statewide, employing tens of thousands of Connecticut citizens. Our members are residential and commercial builders, land developers, remodelers, general contractors, subcontractors, suppliers and those businesses and professionals that provide services to this diverse industry. We also created and administer the Connecticut Developers Council, a professional forum for the land development industry in the state.

The HBA of Connecticut strongly opposes Raised Bill 6464 as it unjustifiably gives authority over multiple funding programs to a lopsided, unbalanced statutory body, the Face of Connecticut Steering Committee. Moreover, we question the need for removing the authority over the affected funding programs from existing agencies.

The Face of Connecticut Steering Committee is heavily weighted toward environmental protection with little balance for economic development and housing concerns. This statutory body, which is less than one year old and by statute meets only quarterly, consists of the Commissioners of DEP, DECD and DOA, Executive Director of the Comm'n on Culture and Tourism, Secretary of OPM, plus ten other members: two for historic preservation, two for open space preservation, two for farmland preservation, a water company representative, a community redevelopment representative, a Brownfields Task Force member and an environmental lawyer who does brownfield work.

Our comments are guided by our experience in having land taken from our members ostensibly for open space but in reality to just stop development. Our fear is that the Face of Connecticut Steering Committee will do the same. This lack of balance is not an appropriate process for determining the use of state money. The various funds that this bill would put under the control of the Face of CT committee should be used to fund the purchase of properties that are of high value to the environment, historic preservation, or other purpose as the case may be. The existing open space grant fund, for example, has a balanced list of criteria to rank purchases with an advisory group that is also balanced. This balance would be lost under this bill. Moreover, it directs that decisions be based on the smart growth principles contained in RB 6467, rather than the principles underlying each of the separate funding programs, and for the reasons contained in our testimony on RB 6467 we believe this bill should not be supported.

Therefore, this bill is unwise, unnecessary and would not improve the use of state funds for the open space, farmland, historic preservation and brownfield purposes the bill would coalesce under one roof. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this legislation.

**Representing the Home Building, Remodeling and Land Development Industries In Connecticut
"Enhancing Our Member's Value to Their Customers and Our Industry's Value to Society"**